

Preface

Athletic foot and ankle injuries



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Guest Editor

Nearly 10 years have passed since the *Clinics in Sports Medicine* published an issue that focused on foot and ankle injuries (Volume 13, Number 4, 1994). As many of this issue's contributing authors comment in their opening paragraphs, the prevalence of athletic injuries of the ankle and foot is very high. More than 20,000 sports-related injuries of the ankle occur every day; even the small percentage that do not return to sport constitutes a large number of people. More complex injuries such as ankle fracture dislocation can be successfully treated until healed, but the athlete's return to sport is a more daunting task than putting an office worker back on the job.

There have been advances over the past 10 years in the recognition and treatment of sports injuries of the adult foot and ankle; many of these are presented in this issue. However, before going forward with what is new and improved, it is important to know that some of the old knowledge and principles are still valid. The human anatomy of the foot and ankle and our understanding of the physiology of the functional mechanics of the foot and ankle are not that different. The same is true of surgical anatomy. My opinion is the same as that of Dr. Phillip Kwong, the guest editor of volume 13, number 4, who stated: "Successful treatment of the [foot and ankle] injuries depends on accurate data, sound clinical judgment, anatomic treatment and early functional rehabilitation."

The authors of this issue were instructed to aim their message at general orthopedists and other physicians who treat athletes and to keep references focused on classic or current sources. Because it is impossible to cover all topics exhaustively without creating a large textbook, I selected several highly relevant topics concerning acute, chronic, and recurrent injuries of the foot and ankle in

sports. The reader will benefit from the expert opinions regarding evaluation and management of problems including fractures, overuse syndromes, instability, pain, and dysfunctional residuals of injury. Each condition of the foot or ankle is presented with the appropriate references to anatomy, physical diagnosis, and biomechanics, so a separate article reviewing anatomy and biomechanics is not needed in this issue. Everyone involved with sports injuries knows that running is not fast walking, that jumping is a complex activity that requires strength and coordination, that footwear affects foot function, and that most athletes recover their competitive ability by using focused activity that mimics the sport itself.

Though the intended audience of this issue is physicians, there is ample information here for other health care providers who evaluate and treat athletes. It may be helpful for the reader to use the references in each article for gaining more detail in the treatment techniques.

There is no substitute for gathering history of the injury and performing a focused physical examination of the foot and ankle before undertaking treatment. Athletic trainers, physical therapists, sports physicians, and surgeons know that most diagnoses of sports injury are made without MRI, arthrograms, nerve conduction tests, and other tests. The evidence provided by mechanical testing devices and advanced imaging tools are very seductive. We need to (1) remind ourselves that we are confident in our examination of the patient, (2) confirm the diagnosis with tests, and (3) follow the progress (or lack of) of recovery again by questioning and examining the patient.

The authors who contributed to this issue of the *Clinics in Sports Medicine* are recognized scholars in the field of foot and ankle surgery, physical therapy, physical medicine and athletic training. They are all clinicians with years of experience in caring for injured athletes and returning them to their respective sports. In essence, the authors share some of their experience and judgment in addition to basic knowledge of injury and repair. You, the reader, can learn something useful from each of the following articles that will help you treat foot and ankle problems in injured athletes.

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